

Ribbon Memorial Will Not Continue

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN

The issue of the ribbon tribute to fallen US soldiers has been laid to rest.

This week, the creator of the memorial stated he

would not recreate or finish his ribbon tribute to those killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom in any other place than in its original location in the woods near the

Round Pond trails off Mayflower Street. Selectmen also took no action after withdrawing a motion that would have allowed public displays on wooded land behind the cemetery off Mayflower St.

Edward Hardy and his daughter Heather walked out of the selectmen's meeting just as the board was about to discuss a motion that would designate part of the Mayflower cemetery land for Hardy to



NO RIBBON RELOCATION: The yellow ribbons to honor fallen U.S. troops will not return to the woods at Round Pond, nor be relocated near Mayflower Cemetery.

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Martecchini said that after seeing this document and speaking to Patrick Browne of the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society he would not be in favor of allowing the memorial to continue at Round Pond because the "agreement treats this as conservation property."

Tuffy did not support allowing the ribbon tribute to continue at Round Pond because if the town allowed this type of memorial on town property then it would have to let another group use town property for a different cause, and he didn't want to set that precedent. Tuffy also didn't support making a space for public displays in unused cemetery land because once the town allows public land to be used as a public forum it cannot deny people from using it in this way in the future. All the town can do is "set reasonable conditions and guidelines," said Tuffy, and since there were none of those in place for this area of cemetery land, he didn't believe the town could allow this to happen.

The conservation commission did not support allowing the Round Pond land to be used for the tribute or for any public displays or demonstrations because allowing "town land as a forum for public displays or demonstrations is inconsistent with the preservation and conservation interests inherent in maintaining such land as open space," according to a August 31, 2004 conservation commission memo.

Hardy told selectmen he was not trying to create a public statement with the ribbons but to create an area for people to think and reflect upon the war. He said he was sad the memorial could not continue, but before he left the selectmen's meeting he hinted that his days of creating memorials may not be over.

"It was a gift to the those who discovered it," Hardy said. "It was not to be a public display as most memorials are. It was not a political statement. The memorial broke no posted rules. It was a temporary display exercising one's freedom of expression. It was a gift of some inner need to heal and reflect on man's humanity to man. You, the town, were threatened by this gift. My idea of the memorial, the gift, was just and noble."

"I leave with much anguish and sadness," Hardy continued. "The candle that burned with such brightness back in May is but a dim glow and the healing has come to a stand still, but I might caution you, the flame is not out."

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finish his tribute, which consisted of yellow ribbons inscribed with the names of 632 soldiers killed in Iraq. Instead, Selectmen Chairman Andre Martecchini withdrew his motion and Selectman John Tuffy agreed with this action.

At the last discussion of this issue, Martecchini had been leaning toward allowing the ribbon tribute to continue at Round Pond, a request of Duxbury's American Legion post 223. Martecchini now said he didn't think that was possible in light of the new information selectmen had received on the property. Selectmen then moved on to other business, ending any more discussion on the issue.

The unauthorized and anonymous memorial was discovered this summer off a walking trail near Round Pond on town-owned land. Hundreds of yellow ribbons listed the names and ages of US troops who were killed in battle since the conflict in Iraq began. Other ribbons commemorated the lives of wounded soldiers, Iraqi civilians who were killed, and those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001. The ribbons were subsequently taken down by summer employees of the Conservation department and then mistakenly taken to the transfer station and thrown away. At the time the ribbons were removed, no one knew who was behind the tribute and there was no town permission granted for it.

When they last met to discuss Hardy's memorial, selectmen took no action because they needed to confirm who the land belongs to. They learned the town owns the land and it is under the selectmen's control. It is not conservation land but it is governed together with other land in the area owned by various agencies, such as Mass. Audubon, the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society, the Duxbury Open Space and Recreation Committee and the conservation commission. Selectmen found a 1988 joint agreement of these organizations with the town that manages approximately 1,000 acres known as the central greenbelt. The land is to be used for passive recreation including trail walking, as a wildlife sanctuary and as conservation land. The agreement contains rules and regulations and spells out how the land should be managed. The conservation administrator has the "lead enforcement responsibilities" for this land, states the agreement.